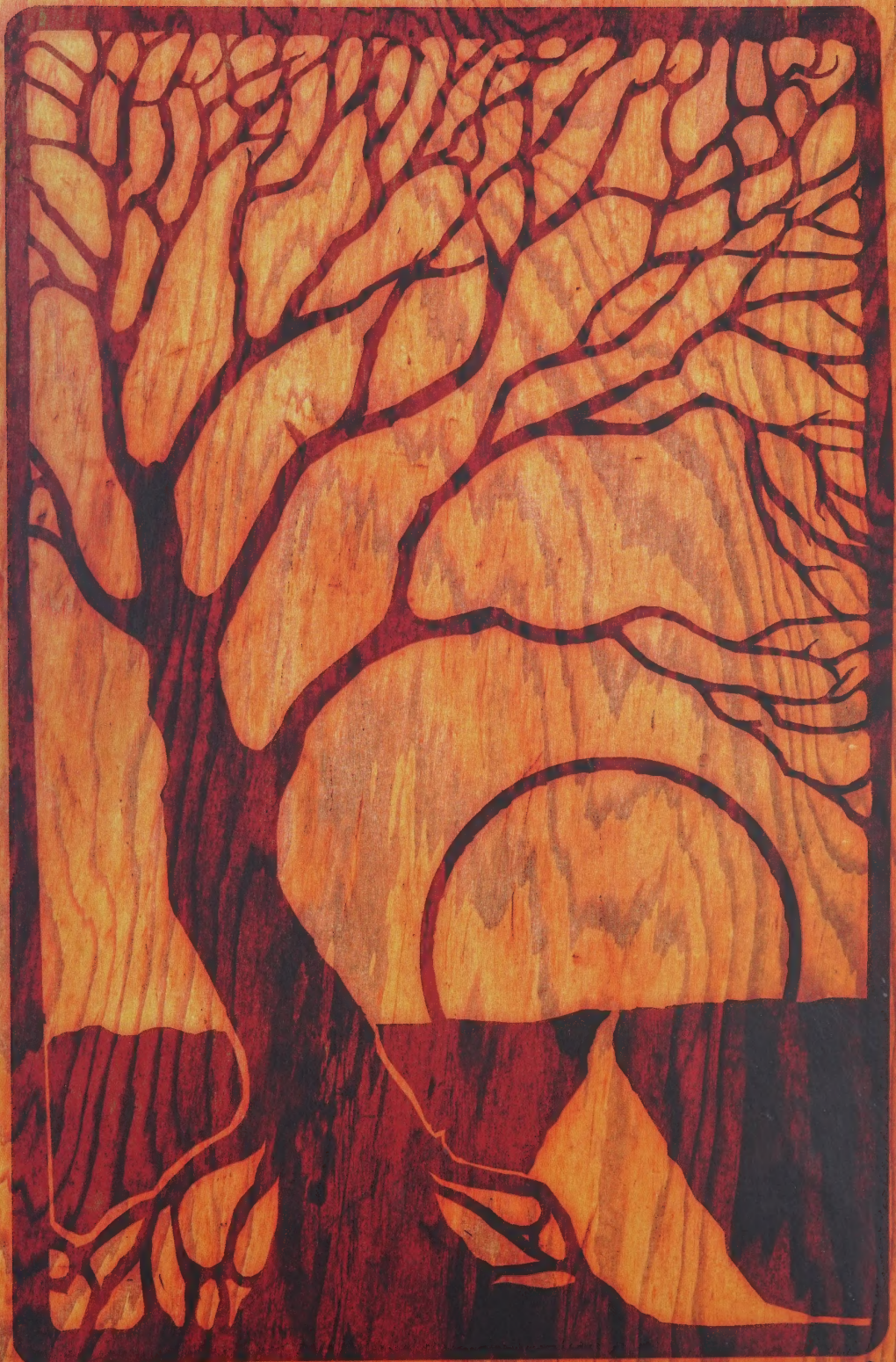

Milestone 2005

Milestone

Southwestern Community College
Volume 6 2005

Art & Literature Review

Creative Expressions of Western North Carolina Artists & Writers

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Mission Statement

Milestone is the annual art and literature review published by Southwestern Community College. The purpose of this publication is to showcase the creative expressions of Western North Carolina artists and writers.

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Thanks to:

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This issue of *Milestone* is dedicated to Michael Revere, local poet and musician, the periodical's first editor, and one of its founders. His vision, commitment, and contributions have been invaluable.

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Milestone

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AMBER C. HUGHES
FIRST PLACE - ART

Regret

Joyce Foster
First place - poetry

I lost you
in darkened theaters
distracted by
the flavors of strangers.
I lost you
among the aisles
of crowded malls
attracted to displays
of haute couture
and the smell of coffee beans.
I lost you
in the cadence
of marching bands
emblazoned creeds
on streaming banners.
I lost you
in swarms of words
that stung
like wild bees.
I lost you over
and over again
in small bites
of neglect
like moths
eating the fabric
connecting us.

(based on Deerwoman)

Billie Jo Hornbuckle
First place - Short Story

To the best of his knowledge, he hadn't been the one who had messed everything up. He had replayed the scene and had concluded that it wasn't his fault. But here he was, trekking through these cold grey woods with only the clothes on his back, while she sat warm and cozy by the campfire he had built. He glanced up through the break in the trees, trying to gauge his direction from the placement of the sun, but by this time the light filtering through was too weak to determine anything useful. It was growing dark quickly, but he had known these woods all his life just like his own backyard. He knew he couldn't get lost if he tried to, and he figured that now was as good a time as any for him to try.

They had been out in the woods camping and having some drinks with friends around their small fire and large keg of beer when things started to go downhill. She was always bitching about how he didn't like any of her friends and should try to be nicer to them. So he was very nice to her cousin with the long legs. But it only caused more trouble, as he had known it would, and they had argued first about how many drinks he had, then about how he was thoughtless and inconsiderate of her feelings. He just couldn't do anything to please her. The argument had escalated and she had actually ended up slapping him. She had never done anything like that before, and it was just too much to take. They parted in a flurry of insults.

His anger was beginning to cool, and now he concentrated only on the monotonous sound of his even steps through the crackling leaves and twigs. He wondered how long he had been walking, and as he deeply inhaled the sharp scent of the woods, the air was so clear that he could taste it like water. The only sounds, other than his own, were the creaking and groaning of ancient trees settling and the occasional shrill of the cocky black crows that watched with eyes like black beads.

As he thought back on the events of the afternoon, he reached forward to push small branches and briars aside with hands that were sticky with blood. His jeans were protecting his legs pretty well but were beginning to fray in places where they

had been torn and hung like flaps. Women were a pain in the ass, he thought as he begun to search out a place to crash for the night. He would be okay, the temperature had not dropped too low yet, and, besides, he had his down-filled jacket to keep him warm. She had been wearing it, but when she had gotten pissed, she flung it at him angrily and now he was glad that she did. Let her wonder where he was tonight. Maybe if he didn't come home tonight, she would learn to appreciate him a little bit and he could play the whole thing up to his advantage.

He started to really feel the effect of the many beers he had consumed and yawned sleepily. It was all well and good to partake of the barley and hops, but if he had more than he should, it always made him drowsy. He smiled as he thought of how she had laughed at him the time she had to help him stumble home from a party one night. She was argumentative at times but she had always been there for him when he needed her.

He knew he would not make it back to camp that night, so he started looking for a place where he could catch some Zs. To his left was a scooped-out place in the earth that had been filled by the blowing leaves. Nearby, the roots of a fallen tree hung over the opening like a fringed curtain. Perfect, he thought. He curled into the hollow and scooped a couple of handfuls of leaves over his legs to keep him warm. It was more comfortable than the air mattress and sleeping bag back at the campsite, and before long he was snoring loudly.

He jerked awake with a start. He held his breath automatically for a couple of seconds as his wide eyes stared blindly into the dark and his brain worked frantically. Then he remembered where he was and why he was there, and he relaxed once more. He had been dreaming about something but couldn't remember what. The details of the dream became hazier with his increasing consciousness. Whatever it was had made him feel uneasy, and his stomach felt on the verge of revolt. He thought of the steaks they had grilled earlier and had to swallow hard to keep from throwing up. He was curled in the same position he had fallen asleep in, and it was still dark. The leaves near the hand tucked under his head were wet from dew. He lay listening for a moment to the sound of a tiny creature scurrying in the brush somewhere in front of him. As he started to drift off again, he wondered why he had awakened to begin with. He listened once more, ears tuned to discern any minute sound that didn't belong.

There it was! It was so far off he wasn't sure it was anything at all, except that the tiny creatures of the forest were suddenly still, and what was quiet before now turned into silence. The animals had better hearing than he did. He strained to hear. At first it sounded like the wind whistling through the tops of trees. But as he concentrated, he could make out a faint tune. It sounded like a flute or something.

He jumped up and brushed away leaves and twigs, unable to believe his luck. The only people who would be out in the woods at this time of night were here for one reason only: to party. He thought of the hippies who had set up housekeeping in his uncle's cabin near the top of the mountain. Yeah man! Everybody knew those guys had the killer stash. He thought of the hippie girls who wore no bras under their hemp clothing. Theirs was not the lifestyle he would choose, but there were times when it didn't seem so bad.

He stumbled through the dark in the direction of the sound. Once he found that he was headed away and had almost gone too far, but then the sound came again and he adjusted his direction. After a few minutes he saw the glow of what looked like a campfire in the direction that the music was coming from. It looked like a party, all right. He hoped they had some beer, or maybe some of the homemade wine they were known for making from the wild grapes that grew on the mountainside.

When he finally made it to the edge of the small clearing, he could hear the crackle of pine in the fire and felt the heat of the fire begin to warm him. He hadn't realized he was shivering, but the temperature was the last thing he thought of as he drew closer.

It wasn't a party exactly. If it had started out that way, everyone had split. It wasn't the hippies he had been hoping for, but this was better. It was only one person. Oh, but what a person.

He had never seen anyone who looked like her. He had lived on the reservation his whole life and had dated Indian and white girls. He liked the white girls because they were more tolerant than the Indian girls and not as demanding. He was a sucker for blonde hair and blue eyes, just like any other guy, but the only girls he had ever loved had been Indian girls. He could not take his eyes off her.

He stood frozen in place and watched as she whirled like a tornado. She was wearing a caramel-colored deerskin under beaded regalia. She held in her hand a

fan of eagle feathers with fringes of bone beads. The violet-colored shawl about her shoulders was embroidered with a gracefully leaping deer and contained delicate golden threads and cut glass beads that sparkled in the light, throwing prisms of color and tiny sparks from the fire in all directions. Her arms were raised so that the layers resembled outstretched wings, and she mimed the flight of the eagle. Jet-black hair gleamed in the light and her teeth flashed white against her bronze face. She knew he was watching. Then, with a slight rustle of her skirt, she had reversed directions and was now spiraling in slow motion as an *a-wo-ho-li* soaring among the clouds. She moved excruciatingly slowly, floating like a leaf on the wind, with such grace that he never even saw the tiny movements she made with her feet to turn. Had he caught a glimpse of anything below the hem of her dress, he would have been very disturbed. But he was absolutely unable to look away from her face. He caught the glimmer of a delicate silver bracelet on her wrist, saw the turquoise against the curve of her collarbone. Deep brown eyes sparkled beneath a fringe of silky lashes. He was spellbound. He could not have imagined such beauty existed. Suddenly he was beside her, and before he had time to wonder who was playing the music that had started again, he was dancing with her. Her eyes held him and he was unable and unwilling to look away. Those eyes promised things he had never even imagined; the full curved lips glistened invitingly. Her skin looked as soft as velvet, and he was moving with her, following as she gradually moved away from the fire.

His heart pounded and he began to take deep, slow breaths while his eyes stayed locked upon hers.

He heard a buzzing sound that he found vaguely disturbing, but his mind was elsewhere. She had led him out of the circle of light, but there was still enough glow to illuminate her outline. The buttery soft deer hide was slipping down over her shoulders to reveal the swell of the tops of her breasts. His hands slipped around her waist and pulled her against him. Every nerve in his body was on fire, even before she trailed light kisses down his neck. Her hands fluttered over him like hummingbirds, teasing. He groaned as their lips met in a scorching kiss, then he pressed her against the rough bark of a white oak tree and ran his hands up her sides, lifting her skirt as he went. His hands skimmed over massively muscled thighs, and he tilted his head for a glance as she nipped the skin of his neck with

her tiny white teeth. When he saw sharp, pointed hooves where her feet should have been, he started to scream.

Several days later, a hunting party came upon the trampled and broken body. Dried blood was spattered along leaves and branches where flies buzzed about; many crawling creatures were working together to assist in the decomposition of the body. Closer inspection revealed what looked to be ragged and torn punctures in the grey skin and the shredded garments.

"Shit, Earl," said the one who had seen the body first. "It stinks to high heaven. Wonder what the hell he was doing way out here?"

Earl could only shrug as he backed away with a camouflage bandana held tightly over his nose and mouth. The soil and grass all around the body was patterned as if it had been trampled down. In places, the grass had been kicked away and in the reddish dirt were the unmistakable tracks of a deer. They stood back at a distance, silent and stunned. All evidence pointed to a tragic encounter with a deer, but one thing puzzled them. Even though the face was already beginning to decay, you could plainly see that the expression on his face was one of sublime happiness.

Doug Woodward
Second place - art

Senior Year, Eighth Period, 2:55

Timothy Kurr
Second place - poetry

She wrote *carpe diem* on the dusty slate, then nimbly
turned towards us. We read gusto in her eyes as she
asked for its meaning. She did not want to ceil us, as had

our parents or her employers. She tapped the floor,
improvising her footwork as she followed our eyes,
and stopped obstreperous puns before they'd begun.

Beckwith tried burrowing his head into his desk's
nether-realm; Middleton stared at the buses outside,
waiting for the bell to sign his ninth period of fun

out behind the school (before going home to Gestapo
glares). But She did not let the wayward stray for long.
Carpe diem, with such intensity we thought magma

might gush from her skull. She explained something
about seizing the day, and how we should raise hell in
everything trig, and how we should walk barefoot on the

beach some morn and watch the sunrise above the bobbing
brine. We trod toe-to-toe to our real lives and the bling of the
bell. We knew not what it meant; and we never learned.

A Road Not Traveled

Doug Woodward
Second place - Short Story

"Laura! Don't forget I need two more eggs right away!" It was Mom calling, and for the moment, I *had* forgotten. Adding a handful of oats to Dolly's feed bucket, I scooped up the basket of eggs I had collected earlier and headed for the house.

"Coming!" I replied, and in a moment I was in the warm kitchen where Mom was mixing the batter for Connie's birthday cake. My little sister, always an early riser, was drawing scary faces in the windowpane frost while she waited to lick the beaters. She was turning three tomorrow, and the cake would be hers.

I could hear the ax rhythmically hitting the chopping block as Brent, the older of my two younger brothers, split kindling on the side porch. The smell of those freshly cut pieces of red oak was as familiar to me as the steamy odors of the barn. It spoke of winter coming, hot apple cider at the kitchen table, the root cellar full of the year's toil, extra quilts on my bed and time for family games while the snow shut out the rest of the world.

Clint, my nine-year-old brother, was still in the bathtub, stretching his time as far as he could. Dad had already left for Clyde Harris's sawmill in the old pickup truck. He would return soon with a load of rough-cut lumber for a new stall in the barn.

I knew that Dolly, our Guernsey cow, would be impatient as I stepped back into the crisp morning air to return to the barn. Our five cats fell into step beside me as soon as they heard the clank of the milk bucket swinging on its hasp.

Dolly twisted her head in the stanchion, giving me that "it's about time" look and indeed, from the size of her udder, she was certainly ready for some relief. I sponged her off and hunkered down on the milking stool, hoping that this wouldn't be a morning that she would put her hoof in the bucket.

Lining up in the stall opposite my position, the cats knew what was in store. Having milked Dolly by hand for five years, I had acquired certain bovine-related skills. I could hit an unsuspecting observer in the eye at ten feet with a warm squirt, and my brothers had learned to be somewhere else at milking time.

But the cats felt differently. They eyed me expectantly from the opposite side of Dolly's belly as I positioned the bucket and nestled my cheek in her flank. They knew that every now and then I would try to squirt them in the ear, but it mattered not. They would guzzle the warm milk whenever they could get their mouths lined up with the stream, and when it was over, they would relax in the straw, cleaning each other's fur.

As I walked back toward the house, I could hear the lower gears whining in Dad's pickup as he climbed the hill on Old North Road before he turned into our lane. He must have quite a load today. When Dad was about my age, there had been a push by the local government and developers to "upgrade" Old North Road into a big high-speed thoroughfare. Fortunately, for us and our neighbors, community opinion had prevailed and Old North remained a friendly country road.

Dad pulled up near the corner of the barn, and I knew he would expect Brent and me to help him unload the lumber. I heard Brent shout, and at the same time his friend Tristan leaped from the truck. I hadn't known he was coming. The boys were both twelve and thought they owned the county when they were together. It was a relief when Dad said, "Laura, Brent and Tristan can handle this job. Why don't you see what Mom needs at the house?"

Just then, Mom appeared at the truck with a basket of freshly baked cookies and a jug of the cider we had pressed last week. "Here, Carl, take the big mug. You must be thirsty after loading all that lumber," smiled Mom.

"Thanks Alice. That really hits the spot!"

Later that afternoon, I took a good book, pen, paper and a snack in my daypack and climbed to the treehouse. The sun had driven the chill from the air, and this spot, overlooking a small waterfall, was one of my favorites for inspiration. If I were lucky, I might have an hour undisturbed, since Connie and Clint were helping Mom and Brent was trading baseball cards with Tristan in his room.

I finished the chapter that I had been reading in *Mists of Avalon*, closed my eyes, and leaned back against the trunk of the huge poplar that supported the treehouse. Try as I might, I could not keep my mind on the story I had been trying to put on paper this week. Dan's smile kept creeping into my mind to send any other thoughts running for cover.

I hadn't known until recently that boys were made this way. Dan had been around ever since I could remember, but all of a sudden it was as if he had turned into someone else—someone who might even know the mysteries of life. He would bring me a pebble that shone like the moon or take me to a spot where pink ladyslippers were blooming beside the branch. I would turn sixteen next week, but never in my life had I felt my insides flutter the way they did when Dan spoke!

He would be there tonight, at the Lonesome Creek Community Center, for the square dance and potluck. I could hardly wait. In fact, I thought, I'd better head

for the tub now if I'm going to have any hot water. The whole family will be going tonight, and the last ones to clean up may have a chilly time of it!

Slipping into the pinafore that I had sewed three weeks ago, I stood in front of the mirror, brushing and trying to decide whether to wear my hair up or down. Finally, I decided on one thick braid down my back. It would stay in place better during some of the faster moments.

Mom was just pulling a mouth-watering vegetable pie from the oven and Dad had his fiddle out of the case, checking that all was in order. "Grandma called and would like us to bring her a small basket of winesaps. Everything went into cider last Tuesday, so they'll need to be picked. Laura, would you?"

"Sure, Mom," though I knew the only apples left were in the higher branches. I wish she had asked while I was still in my jeans, I thought as I headed for the orchard. The sun was just about to drop behind the ridge and I could feel the chill in the air already.

Fortunately, the ladder still rested against the upper branches of one of the winesap trees. Hooking the basket over one arm, I scrambled up within reach of the apples, only to find that some were beginning to rot and the birds had been at work on others. I had to stretch to find enough good ones.

"We see England, we see France…." It was Brent and Tristan, grinning at the bottom of the ladder!! "We see Laura's under…." Splat!! A rotten apple caught Brent squarely in the forehead as Tristan dived for cover! I hadn't been shortstop on the high school softball team last spring for nothing. Younger brothers—blah!

My basket was nearly full anyhow. There was a beep from the van, which meant Mom and Dad were ready to go. I scrambled down the ladder, and the three of us dashed out of the orchard and squeezed into the rear seats with Connie and Clint and the hot casserole.

It was a curvy ride and the boys kept trying to mash me against the side of the van when a bend in the road came my way. But my mind wasn't on the horseplay—it was looking ahead to the dance. In ten minutes we were there; a crescent moon hung over the ridge to the west, and warm light streamed out of the community center windows. My heart was already dancing.

But something is wrong—dreadfully wrong. I am not here. This is not my life. I mean…it would have been my life, but I never lived. Neither did Brent and Clint and Connie. The Lonesome Creek Community Center was bulldozed twenty-three years ago when they widened and straightened Old North. You see, Alice, the girl that would have been my mother, was killed waiting for the schoolbus on a crisp fall morning back in '99. She thought she had time to rescue her kitten from the

highway, but the road had changed—drivers could hit 75 if they had a mind to, and this one did.

The high school was in shock that day, but no one more so than Carl, who, with his fiddle, used to accompany Alice as she sang Scottish ballads. As it was, he never married but stayed on to work the family farm and would only now and then play his fiddle for some community event. At times such as these, his music would fill the room while his mind went far away, seeking desperately for a future that never was. But now and again—in the shifting mist of that alternate future—he would glimpse his Alice…and sometimes his Connie, Clint, Brent and Laura. It is only there that I exist.

Highway 28 North, out of Franklin, NC, is a two-lane country road that winds its way through the valley of the Little Tennessee River. It generally follows the contour of the surrounding mountains, serving as a feeder to the town rather than a connector to anywhere else. In 1990, a proposal to widen and straighten this road was assigned a project number and incorporated into the State's TIP (Transportation Improvement Plan). Preliminary engineering had been funded. Knowing what effect the road would have on our rural way of life and suspecting that the real push behind it was simply big money (the creation of a second direct high-speed route to the gambling in Cherokee), many of us in the community fought the project over the next decade—fought it hard and successfully. The project no longer exists—the Little Tennessee Land Trust and the Needmore Tract now stand in its way—but no victory of this kind is ever permanent without continuing vigilance. This piece of fiction arose out of my feelings for our way of life in the Cowee, Rose Creek, Oak Grove, Burningtown, Tellico and Needmore communities.
—doug 10/30/04

On Dying In One's Sleep

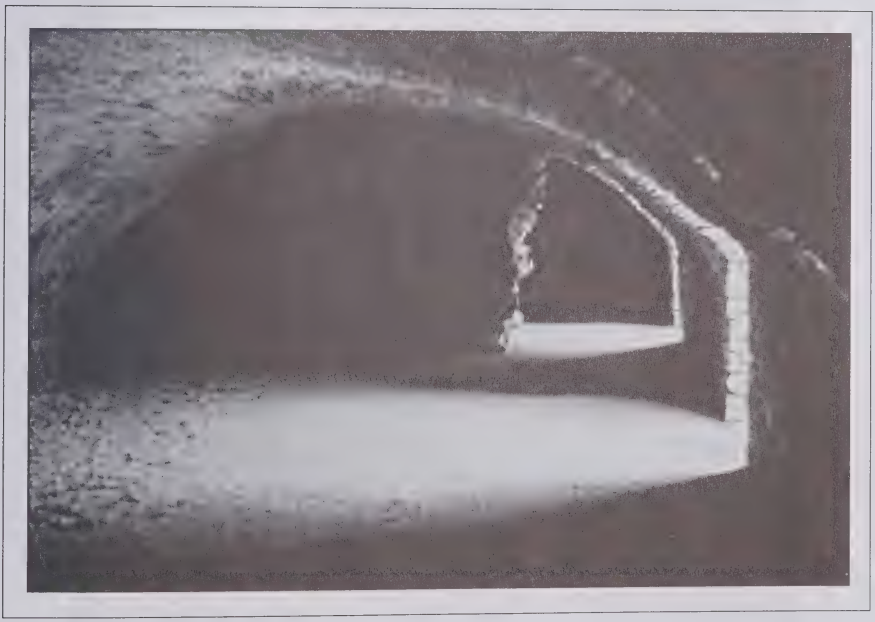
Diana L. Jurss

I woke up once but it wasn't enough.
Night-time's odd cage We call them dreams,
those places we're sent. Why would
anyone want to die in their sleep?

Prisoners dream of cakes, hot baths.
Their minds climb fences to be
awakened back.
A mirage? An escape? or a subconscious
prayer?

From Genesis to Patmos
we've tried to run or hide.
We smash all ten commandments
with the single sin of pride.

No. It is not worth it.
Even Hell's reprieve.
I wouldn't trade its fiery gates
to sleep-walk through Heaven's portal.
Take me awake.



JAMIE PATTERSON

Forest Woodward

A Visit To The Cemetery

Kay Williams Yount

I stand where I will lie
A visitor contemplating occupancy

I stroke the lamb of my infant son
Granite hard is the fleece
There is no softness in this land

All that appears beautiful is unreal
True flowers wilt and die
Here mortality is confirmed and denied

Silent
I survey a garden of sorrow
Markers as far as can be seen
Describe the contents of this ground

Negotiation is not an option
My future surrounds me

Olé

Michael Revere

She flicks aside
        my overtures of affection
with the offhanded ease
        of a psychic matador
teasing a blind
and balding bull.

Amber C. Hughes

Joshua Hughes

Hymn To Otero

Thomas Rain Crowe

"...everything looks dark now, but I saw and kept faith."
—Blas de Otero
from "Fidelity"

I carry the teeth of night
in the pocket of my winter coat.
Down roads where no one sees.
And nothing lasts.

As a boy I watched trains
and drank rain
straight from the sky.
The metal gate closes
on schools that are zoos for the mind
and the rich.
And I will think again
before I say yes to something
my body feels a lie.

We look sad in lines
at the door of the moon.
I think we'll all be
manservants
and midwives
to what it costs to be free.
The sun stands stern at the gate,
whip in hand.

My country far behind.

Nowhere to go.

Uncle Hose (Pronounced-Whose)

B.F. Eller

"Yeah, up here to get you a little nookie, ain't you? Think you'll find a little nookie up here, do you?"

When you're fourteen and being teased by an adult about sex and there's no place to go, no place to hide, you just stand and wilt, particularly if there's a smidgen of truth in the teasing.

My dad and I were visiting Uncle Hose, Dad's oldest brother, and he was having fun. His grin was infectious and mischievous…always mischievous. He'd pull his upper lip off his teeth, wrinkling his nose, like he was grinning at the changing of a grandchild's diaper.

"Yeah, a little nookie…. Want to play a few hands?"

To the consternation of many and delight of few, I frequent Las Vegas four/five times a year. My excuses are "just get away to relax, unwind, have fun blah…blah… blah." The truth is I like to gamble. No, I LOVE to gamble. I love Vegas. The glitz, the tackiness, the clinking of the machines, the smell. I love it all. So for three or four days a few times a year I visit and I wallow in it.

A friend asked the other day, "Why Vegas so often?"

I started my "get away to relax, unwind…," but he interrupted.

"El toro poo-poo, why?"

"I love to gamble."

Again he asked, "Why?"

"Uncle Hose," I answered, "Uncle Hose."

My first recollection of Uncle Hose was when I was four years old. He lived in Avery County, halfway between Elk Park and Heaton. Avery County is infested with relatives. When we visited, Dad and I would drop Mother off at her parents' and head to Uncle Hose's. It was late afternoon, between five and six. We pulled into his driveway full of cars and trucks.

Dad smiled and said, "They're playing."

I had no idea what that meant. We entered the house, walked through the living room, dining room to a large den area just off the kitchen. There sat seven men and Uncle Hose around a large oval table with all the amenities of poker…cigarettes,

cigars, drinks, cards and money. Oh, the money. The pots were unbelievable… bills, all twenties, fifties and one hundreds. The men had small rakes to drag winning pots into half-bushel baskets beside their chairs. I was four and I was mesmerized. First time in my life I'd ever seen fifty and one hundred dollar bills. This was 1943. Uncle Hose owned a beer parlor which earned him a hundred dollars a day. The other players owned "mica mines" and because of the war, they prospered.

Uncle Hose was small, bent but fastidiously neat, always trimmed out, hair slicked back; his countenance smelled of Butter Rum cologne…fingers, yellow, waxed from smoking. Walking wasn't easy for him…walked with a crutch, his left foot about six inches off the ground, a caricature of an old Bob Cratchet. He stayed in his chair when we came in. He greeted Dad and reached for me.

"Hello, Ben [my father]…. Well, who's this? Come here, you little shit, teach you how to play poker. Ben, pull up a chair, play a few hands."

Dad declined, "Oh no, too rich for me." Dad made less than a dollar an hour.

I stood at Uncle Hose's side as he played and explained the game to me like I was an adult. It was pure poker, straight five-card-stud. Hundreds, sometimes thousands, in a pot. I learned about aces, pairs, three of a kind, then calling, raising, bluffing. I remember straights, flushes and baskets overflowing and being emptied. They played and drank as smoke clouded blue on the ceiling. God, how they smoked. Around ten Dad nudged me.

"'Bout time to brush your teeth and get to bed, son."

My eyes never left the table. "Can I watch a little while longer?"

Dad rose. "I'm getting ready for bed; you come on."

Twenty minutes later Dad returned. "Bennie, it's time for bed."

At 1:30 a.m. I awoke, slipped out of bed and returned to the game. My dad found me at five o'clock in the morning, grinned and hauled me back to bed. At eight o'clock, I awoke again, ran to the table. It was over. I remember playing with the cards until eleven o'clock, breakfast.

Over the years Uncle Hose became my legend…always wanted to go there. Maybe they'd be playing. If not, he would play with me, play poker with me, and we bet real money…pennies…nickels. He'd show me a pistol, a pair of brass-knuckles, his ponies, his new Buick Century.

I was ten when I hit the "four aces." There were four of us playing: me, Dad, Uncle Hose and his wife, Mary Will. Mary Will was dealing. I was dealt a ten of clubs in the hole, then an ace, then another, and another and another. I've hit blue seven jackpots and royal flushes in Vegas, but nothing will ever top my four aces in four-handed five-card stud at Uncle Hose's, June 5, 1949…thirty-seven cents in that pot.

Never occurred to me to ask about his crippled leg until I was a teenager. Thought he must've been born that way. When I asked my dad, guess he thought I was old enough to know.

"Well, son, your Uncle Hose used to do a little bootlegging. A deputy got after him somewhere around Cranberry. Hose wrecked, ruined his leg, been crippled ever since. The car turned over and he would have smothered to death if he hadn't had a pistol. Shot air holes in the top of the car or he would've."

I had an uncle that was a gambler and a bootlegger. The legend grew. I was eleven when I asked him. Boys at eleven are permitted to ask stupid questions. "Uncle Hose, why do you gamble so much?"

His diaper-smelling grin wrinkled his nose as he shuffled the cards. "Gambling is like life. It's a roll of the dice and, make no mistake, the odds are against you. But once in a while, once in a great while, somebody grabs the brass ring. It's your bet."

I've thought about that brass ring over the years. Grabbed some small one's…graduating, getting a job, a doctorate, tenure, full professor…and a few big one's…marriage, children, grandchildren…. Yearn to grab a few more.

His legend never diminished, but times got harder. The war ended. The mica mines and beer parlor went bust. The pots got smaller and I learned what "skipping the deal" meant, and sometimes he lost hard. In 1951 he sold a farm for $3,000, got into a poker game that same afternoon and came home without a dime. One week, he was buying a new car, going to Hilton Head, the next, borrowing money. As he said, "The odds are against you." But everybody loved Uncle Hose, and with cause.

"Hose, could I borrow your car? Need to pick up Aunt Earl at the bus station."

"Sure," and keys would be tossed.

"Don't know where I could find a good pair of mules, do you?"

"Check with Uncle Barlow. He's been trying to sell a pair."

"Could you loan me ten till payday?"

If he had the money it was lent and there were calls in the middle of the night.

"Hose, Jed's in jail again. Got drunk in Banner Elk. Could you talk to the sheriff? Bail's fifty dollars. I'd go, but with the kids and all it's hard for…."

He's go, and more often than not Jed would leave with him.

When I was attending college I didn't see him very often. He moved to California with his oldest son, Dick. Dick owned a restaurant there, and Uncle Hose helped him at the cash register. He had just eaten breakfast and gone to the register. He slumped without a word. The doctor said it was his heart. Interesting how often you don't know how much you care until you hear they're gone.

Dick and I have become very close since Uncle Hose died. Goes with me to Vegas on occasion. When my father died three years ago, Dick and I talked. I asked him how old Uncle Hose was when he died. He said, "Sixty-three." My response was again stupid.

"Didn't realize Uncle Hose was that young when he died. He didn't even have a chance to draw his social security."

Dick smiled. "He never paid into social security."

"How'd he get away with that?"

"Never had a social security number, never paid taxes. Hated the government, never trusted them."

The legend of Uncle Hose still grows, and I go to Vegas still grabbing for another small brass ring.

Last year, on Bravo and A&E the "World's Series of Poker" was one of the fasting-growing programs on TV. Pure "Texas Hold-'em." One of these evenings I'll tune in and there, with hundreds of thousands of dollars in chips in front of them, playing for a million-dollar jackpot, will be Walt, Moneymaker, Chen, The Professor…and sitting to the left at the head of the table will be Uncle Hose. The two down cards will be dealt, and the camera will zoom to Uncle Hose's hand as he curls the edges of a pair of case-wired kings. He'll whiff the diaper ever so slightly, look straight into the camera, right at me, and like the magic he lived, he'll whisper so no one can hear except me,

The Bus

Joyce Foster

She had moved awkwardly
through the nearly empty lobby
as though to beg pardon for her intrusion
but once outside she moved with the elegance
of a priestess who, with solemn intent,
bent to light a candle.
With the strike of a flint and a breath of depth,
smoke curled from her mouth and nostrils and
wrapped her head in a cumulus veil.
As a lover would do, she clasped her arms
about her breast, putting her lips
again and again to her adored.
She drew an arc on the pavement with
her right foot, then her left, as though
to mark the ground hallowed.
She tapped her object of affection twice,
not once each time but twice
as if to bless the ashes as they fell.
I edged back against the chair, ashamed
of my absorption with her intimate ritual,
envious of her containment,
the fulfillment of each breath, while I
waited as one to be sentenced
the dry toast and pale juice untouched.
Suddenly she bent over the urn, down, down
inhaling deeply with each breath then
twisted the cigarette into a mangled stub
as the shuttle drew up for the cancer clinic.

NANCY MINARD

Rocking Thomas

Kay Williams Yount

I should try to get some work done, but I find I am spending most of my day rocking Thomas. My grandson enjoys it…so do I. I ought to finish the ironing so my husband will have a decent shirt to wear to work, but look how Thomas leans over to bite my finger with his two newly acquired teeth.

Today would be a good day to clean the closet and pack away the summer clothes, but he snuggles next to me and puts his arm around my neck as he lays his head on my shoulder. It just occurred to me that if I'm going to go to the grocery, I need to make a list. But from my chair I can see through the window to where the ducks are playing on the pond, and now the baby has gone to sleep in my arms.

Perhaps I should put him in his bed and make something special for dinner. Oh, look, his lips make little sucking movements. How perfect are his features, how soft his dimpled hand. It won't hurt for me to sit here awhile longer and breathe the enchanting fragrance that Ivory Snow and Johnson's Baby Powder couldn't possibly have produced.

Today would be a good day to scrub and wax the kitchen floor, and I really should clean the oven. But there is something about an autumn day, falling leaves, and a baby in my arms that causes me to slow down and remember.

I remember a fall day, many years ago, when I heard my children's happy voices shouting as they came down our drive from the school bus: "It's fall, it's fall, it's fall." I looked out the window and saw Amy and Roy, arms outstretched, faces turned skyward as they tried in vain to catch the hundreds of

leaves floating past. The sight of my children, surrounded by the colorful evidence of passing time, brought a lump to my throat and drew me out the door to join them. I knew, even then, it wouldn't seem long before my little girl and boy would be sharing their autumns with new loves. And soon, this day with Thomas will only exist in my memory.

Maybe I should have run the sweeper, put another load of laundry in the machine, baked a cake, or at least dusted the furniture. But I've sat here so long that, now, I don't have time to do any of those chores before Amy gets off work and comes to pick up her baby. And, since it is late, and so much time has come and gone, I think I'll just sit here a little longer…rocking Thomas.

Paleontologist's Meditation

Ralph B. Montee

Who are these strangers in the stones
Now come to an uneasy rest
In this graveyard of white bones?
Bones so fine, so light they rise
Up and walk in the morning sun,
Hold converstations
Until the day has run
Its course, echoing
Their questions in the evening air:
    Who are we?
    When did we live?
    Why are we here?
Are they brothers and sisters all,
Linked to us in blood and bone—who
Lived days of fear and thunder
Watched night skies in wonder—
Or only strangers in the stones?

DEBORAH MONAUNI

Rhiannon Lone Wolf

(based on Spearfinger)

Billie Jo Hornbuckle

They had always told us the legends when we were little. Many of the stories were the ways our ancestors had explained the unexplainable things like creation, the gift of fire, things like that. Some of the ones about animals were funny. Then there were the more serious ones; I figured these were to frighten us into behaving and keep us from wandering too far away from home and into the mountains. I guess they were meant for our protection. The idea was for us to tell them to our own children after we were grown, but by then, many of us felt that they were not fact based but superstitious tales meant for entertainment. That was the idea, right?

Our people had always liked to think of ourselves as a progressive tribe, holding on to our traditions while at the same time moving forward along with the rest of the world. It was more common now for members of our tribe to have sought and attained a college education than it was in the time of our parents and grandparents. We were just luckier as far as our resources went.

After I had taken several psychology classes at the local university, I no longer thought that all of the myths and legends of my people were necessarily appropriate for telling children. Oh, I did think that they were still a part of the culture that needed to be shared, but not with children. My daughters laughed every time I told them how the possum had ended up with a bald tail, were amazed when I told them how Grandmother Spider had carried fire on her back to light the world, or how the Milky Way was the result of a huge dog running away with a mouthful of stolen cornmeal. I just couldn't imagine what sort of damage I would inflict on my children by telling them about Deerwoman[1] or some of the other tales that were even scarier.

Growing up in the mountains of Western North Carolina, particularly on the reservation, was far different for me and my brothers and sisters than for children today. When I was a girl, summers were spent running barefoot through mountain streams and up brushy hills, legs scratched from wild blackberry bushes and hands calloused from the grapevines that I loved to swing on. Now, had my mother caught even a glimpse of me swinging out over the steep mountainside while clinging precariously to a flimsy vine that might or might not hold, I believe *that* activity would have come to a screeching halt. Lucky for me, I had older brothers who just couldn't stay out of trouble, so her attention was focused largely on their exploits and misadventures. My dolls and stuffed toys, or at least the ones that managed to escape decapitation by my brothers, lay ignored for the most part. I preferred adventure and absconded with my brothers' Evel Kenievel toys instead and jumped the small action figure and his motorcycle across the small stream

behind our house at every available opportunity. Most of the jumps were successful, though others were not and I spent countless hours tracking Evel and his motorcycle downstream to the point where they would catch on the debris that clogged the stream at intervals. Sloshing in the water up to my ankles, I would fish them out and begin planning how to make the next jump a success. My Barbie dolls couldn't hold a candle to that kind of fun.

We could roam safely all over the neighborhood where we lived, and often kids from all the houses around would gather for a game of football or basketball. In the summer time, we would collaborate on projects like damming the creek to make a swimming hole. One winter, we even set up a makeshift assembly line to fashion together scraps of wood, old bike parts, and anything else we could find to make some surprisingly good sleds to ride in the snow. Almost all of our runs were successful, and the ones that weren't ended in bruised knees and battered egos. We would stay out for hours on end, and our mothers knew we were okay. Nobody ever had to worry about us, not just because we were all family in one way or another but also because we looked out for each other.

Times are different now. It would be impossible to say exactly when the change took place, but it certainly did. The neighborhood doesn't look very different than it did back then, but there is a difference now that can be felt if not seen. Families still look out for each other. But the difference is that we once worried about things like bee stings and scraped knees, but now we worry about things like substance abuse and inappropriate touches from overly friendly neighbors. It's not that these things are anything new to us; it is that they are no longer kept hidden so much and we know they are a reality for us as much as for anyone else these days. Kids still run and play outside. They just don't do it out of sight of watchful parents and family members.

We've really progressed, huh….

But anyway, I still think the elders must have known so much more than they ever told us. Their fears of *ski-lis*[2] have somehow become less important than our fears of deer ticks and the lime disease they carry, or the spotted mosquitoes that spread encephalitis in numbers greater in our area, per capita, than in any other area. These are real to us. These real-life, everyday things have come to take precedence over one of the cardinal rules of our people: respect your elders. If we were doing this as we should be, we would have listened carefully to their words. But we didn't. We scoffed at those old stories as mere superstition. But we shouldn't have.

They said it happened down there in Snowbird. It has always been the most traditional of all the communities. There are more full-bloods there and more

that speak the language. I think that is because they are set so far apart from the rest of us, geographically, they're almost frozen in time there in that valley. They don't have easy access to a lot of the things we take for granted, so they have more time to carry on all the traditions most of us here neglect.

The differences are even obvious in the food. They eat traditional foods like beanbread wrapped in hickory leaves, wild greens, wisheys, and wild game like bear and deer on a regular basis while we tend to reserve those foods for special occasions.

They still have regular stickball matches and they practice Indian medicine as much as possible. They are deeply religious. They come to Cherokee as little as possible.

One time when I was a little girl, my brother and I went to spend some time with an uncle of ours down in Snowbird. My mother warned us that it was very different there and we might become easily bored and wish to come back home. We promised her we would be good and behave ourselves. What we didn't tell her was that we were going for the horse that he had promised us. He said he had an old mare that he no longer had use for, and we could have it if we saw her and loved her on first sight. I knew that we would. I loved her already. I think the reason he had picked the two of us out of all the others was because we were the two who loved horses. My brother would sit for hours drawing pictures of horses, and I just loved all animals in general. We knew that we could never take the horse home, but it didn't matter. She would still belong to us, but my uncle would keep her for us and continue to care for her. We could spend time with her anytime we wanted to. I don't really remember how long we stayed. It must have been about two weeks. The time flew by for us because we were having such a good time. We named the horse Jackie. Her hide looked like it was made of the softest black velvet, and her eyes sparkled mischievously when she saw us coming to visit her. If we brought her some small treat like a sugar cube or an apple, she would allow us to stroke her silky neck while she nibbled. I would giggle while she snuffled her velvet nose in my palm and smiled wickedly under the glare of my brother, who was terrified of her. He dearly loved horses but was so afraid of them he could only feel safe admiring their beauty from a distance.

As the youngest of eight, I was accustomed to regular torture at the hands of my brothers. Strangely, they were very overprotective of me when it came to anyone other than themselves roughing me up. The fact that I could be near Jackie to pet and feed her while he stayed at a distance was my only chance to have one up on him for once. I couldn't wait until we went back home again so I could tell everyone what a big baby he had been—afraid of a little old mare.

Other than playing with our cousins and the horse, I don't really remember a lot about that stay. I did notice that my uncle and his family seemed to get spooked pretty easily. Having been teased so much by my brothers, I was not as timid as I might have been otherwise. And besides, the people of this area were more superstitious about all kinds of stuff.

As guests in my uncle's small house, we had the same bedroom that was always reserved for guests in Indian households: the living room sofa. We were lucky because our uncle had a sofa that pulled out to make a creaky but comfortable bed. It was an adventure for us. On our first night there, we giggled for hours at the way his wife snored so loudly, forgetting that our own mother snored even louder than that. It wasn't that same night—I don't remember which night it was—that we nearly had the snot scared out of us by a loud scream in the night.

We sat straight up, rubbing our eyes and trying to remember where we were as we listened to the sounds of feet shuffling about and the muffled curses that accompanied loud thumps and crashes into furniture. After several minutes of this, Uncle finally managed to flip on a light and crept cautiously down the hall to check on us. "Don't worry," I remember him whispering to us, "it's just a *ski-li* and I won't let it get you." He laughed quietly, flipping the light back off as he went down the hall and back to bed. My sleepy mind fuzzily (and falsely) interpreted *ski-li* as some kind of insect. My sleep-hazed thoughts connected the idea with a bug that looked like a green cricket, and I was asleep again before I knew it. By the next morning I had forgotten the whole thing and still wouldn't have remembered it today if my brother hadn't reminded me. In any case, our visit was soon over and we were home again.

Anyway, I heard it was Diamond Jones's family. I remembered him from several years ago when my sister's husband had been working down toward Snowbird as a ranger in the Cheoah Forest District. One evening, his boss had called and wanted to know if he was going to be out of work the next day, too. As far as my sister knew, he had left early that morning for work. He never came home. After three days of searching and showing his picture on the local news station to fish for information, all to no avail, my eldest sister and I decided to take a little drive on our own. Our idea was to simply trace the same route he always took to work, stopping at every place along the way with his photo until we found out what had happened. This continued for the first part of the day. By the time we were just outside of Snowbird, there were deep ravines along the side of the road that we could not see into. We decided to park and walk along the side of the road on foot until we had covered the whole area. As soon as we had parked and set

out, though, a police car slid silently across the grass beside us. The officer was Diamond Jones, and we explained what we were doing. We asked if it would be possible to get any assistance from his department for our search. He told us to meet him in town; he would go up the road to turn his car around and would follow right behind us. It wasn't even a mile from there that he sped up behind us and signaled for us to pull over. He rushed up beside us and said that he thought he had found the car. We turned and followed him back to a place that was about twenty yards from the place we had stopped the first time. We stepped out of the car and craned our necks to see down the steep embankment where we could see the blue gleam of a car shining beneath the thick brush. It had to be the one.

Diamond told us to stay put and shambled down the bank, partly climbing and partly sliding. He held to shrubs and roots as he went so he wouldn't tumble head over heels. My sister and I sat on the soft grass at the edge of the road and prayed. Several minutes later, Diamond returned, red faced and gasping for breath. All our hope died when we saw the look on his face. He told us that the body was there, and based on the stage of decomposition, he must have died instantly. We left immediately to speed home to our family.

So anyway, that's how I know Diamond. I didn't know much more about him than that his first wife, who was a *yu-neg*[3], had left him many years ago to raise their daughter, who was now a teenager. Then he had finally met and married one of the Welch girls, and they had the twins who must have been about seven years old or so at the time it all happened. They looked like everyone's idea of what a family should be. But everyone knew about those Welches. They were full-bloods; the women were very beautiful but a little strange. Very traditional and set in the old ways. Diamond's new wife must have told the twins about Spearfinger.[4]

This is how I heard it.

The twins, a boy and a girl, had snuck out that night into the woods behind their house. It wasn't the first time, evidently, because they had stashed a couple of flashlights and a package of strawberry Twizzlers in the large knothole of a tree. They must have crept out into the darkness several times, waiting, probably giggling and trying to scare each other.

Well, anyway, I guess it must have finally happened on the night she slipped into their room and saw that they weren't there. Diamond was on a late shift and she had dispatch radio him. By the time he got home, she had already set out into the woods with one of his hunting spotlights, and he located her easily by following the beam of light that cut through the darkness. He finally caught up

with her. She was nearly hysterical and her eyes were wild with fear. "I can't find them," she kept saying to him. "I have to find them before she does." He lifted her as she struggled then fell limp into his arms. He carried her back to the house where several patrol cars and an ambulance had arrived to illuminate the scene with their flashing lights. One of the paramedics gave her a shot that made her lose consciousness almost immediately. It was merciful that she was still knocked out when they found the twins a couple hours later.

It was one of the volunteer firefighters that found them. There was a large brush pile that seemed to be impenetrable. It was sheer luck that he was so clumsy, for when he bent to pick up his flashlight that had fallen when he stumbled over a low tree limb, he noticed a tiny hole near the bottom of the pile. It was at such an angle that you would never see it if you were standing, but it was as plain as day if you were down close to the ground. The hole was just about the right size for a child to squeeze through. He slid his leg through and then shimmied in after it. He was a bit larger than the hole was, but he managed to wriggle through with only minor scratches and one small skin tear on his shoulder. When he got to the center, the space opened up considerably, giving him room to stand. He was dizzy and claustrophobic, and his stomach churned uneasily. He was aware of some musky odor that he prayed was not an animal with sharp teeth and a bad temper. He wondered if he had invaded an animal den. He finally located his flashlight and looked around.

He was so startled he almost dropped his flashlight when he saw the twins. They rested atop what looked like strangely shaped pieces of wood or stone, and their eyes gleamed hazily in the dim light. He was about to tell them everything was okay when he noticed that everything was not okay. They each had large glistening cavities where their stomachs had been. As he turned to run, he stumbled and instinctively thrust both hands out before him to try to break his fall. Something hard and round, about the size of a grapefruit, rolled away beside his hand, and he realized that the pile was not stones or sticks but was a pile of bones that contained several small skulls. The flashlight reflected the tiny white teeth and empty eye sockets as it rolled away across the sticky ground.

The rest of the search party had come on the run when they heard the screaming. They used firefighting equipment to break through to him. I heard that he had a brief vacation in Broughton and was never quite the same again after that.

All of this happened awhile back, and the investigators are still no closer to the

answers they seek. They were able to close out several old missing-persons cases that had never been solved after all the remains were identified. Some of the bones were identified as children who had gone missing as long ago as 1912.

The twins were sent to Chapel Hill for autopsy, which determined that they both had their livers removed with surgical precision. The livers were not found. Diamond and his wife were unable to overcome what had happened and ended up getting divorced. I heard she finally moved out west somewhere. A lot of people who don't know any better whisper that she did it. But the old ones know what happened.

A lot of us have started telling the old legends again. Now we make sure that we tell about Spearfinger, and the children who hear the tale never wander into the woods alone. Come to think of it, not many adults do, either….

Notes:

[1] Deerwoman—Cherokee legend tells of a stunningly beautiful woman who is part deer. She lures young men away from gatherings to dance with her, then she draws the life out of them. She is also found in Poncca legend which tells of her appearance at dances where she is seen by only a few then is gone again; after the dance, hoof prints are visible where she has been.

[2] Ski-li—Cherokee, meaning "monster" or "boogey man"

[3] Yu-neg—Cherokee, meaning "white"

[4] Spearfinger—Cherokee legend tells of an old witch with an insatiable appetite who lives in the woods, waiting for children who have wandered too far. She has a finger that is long and very sharp at the end like a small spear. She is said to use this finger to cut out the livers of her victims to eat.

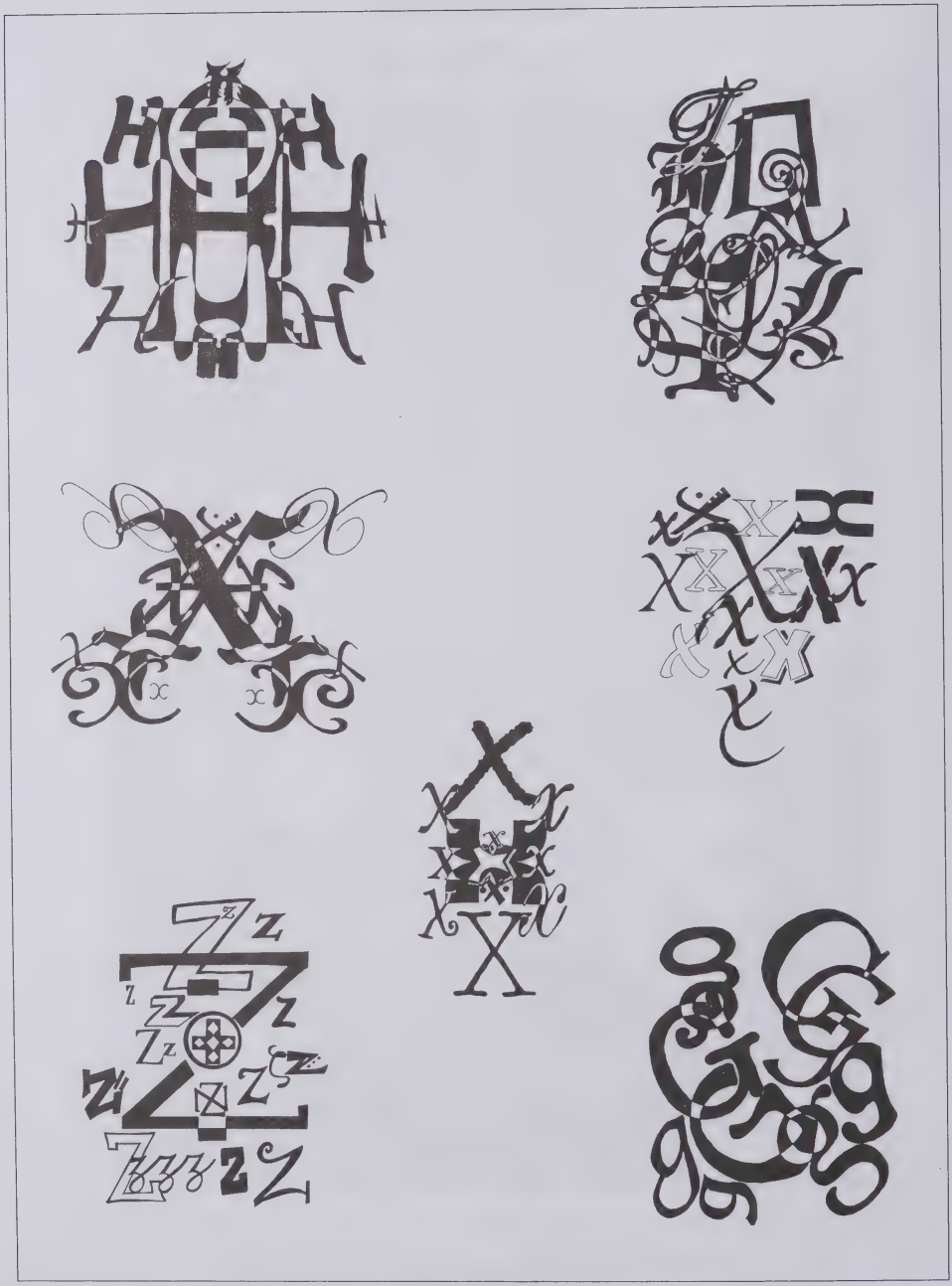
JOHN CISNEROS

Alien Teens

Thomas Rain Crowe

We have come here
from ten million
miles away
to make strange circles
in the fields,
to scare farmers
on old dirt roads
at night, and
make crazy lights
in the sky.
After all,
we have nothing else
to do,
but be young
and indulgent.
To ride the roads
of the cosmos
and drink strange fluid
to our heart's content.
We know you are
wondering what is going on
and who we are.
But you will
never find out.
This would spoil
all the fun
and is the whole reason
we come all this way.
It's better than
screaming obscenities
or throwing beer cans
at passing cars.
Hey, man,
watch out!
I'll bomb you with
a stash of stars!

Bernreid, Germany
May 2003



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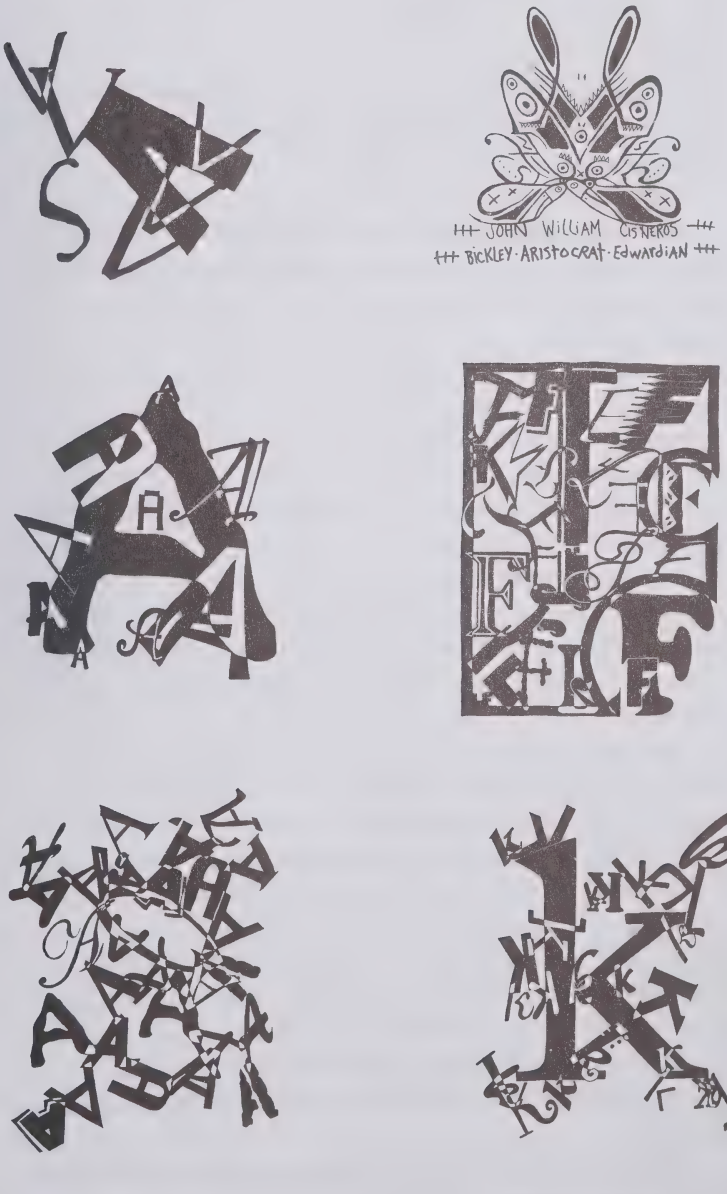

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David's Journey

Karen Gilfillan

David heard soft voices floating around him. He recognized the voice of his priest. The last rites began. David closed down. It was 11:35 p.m. The first day of August.

A gentle man. A quiet man. A poet.

David was many things to those he met on his life's journey. A husband, father, grandfather, mentor, confidante and always a friend. His piercing blue eyes seemed to look right into your soul. He was at home with himself. You felt at home with him.

The family held vigil throughout the night.

"I'm hungry."

A gasp sprang forth from those gathered. Annie reached for husband's hand and said, "We thought you were gone."

"I was. I didn't see anybody I knew. We were riding around and I told him I did not see a familiar face."

"David, who were you riding with?"

"Well, God. He looked straight at me and said I wasn't ready. Said he was sending me back for two more weeks. Right now, I'm hungry."

Family and friends looked at one another with astonished eyes. Two more weeks…. David smiled.

David had known his life was ebbing, losing touch with the world he had known for so many years. A man who loved nature, he now thought of himself as a morning sunrise lowering into a red-hewn sunset over peaceful waters. He had fought the consuming disease for so long. Lately he had been filled with pain that seemed to tear at him anew with each passing day.

A proud man. A strong man.

He wished to spare those he loved the wrenching grasp death had on him. He could not. Sadness filled his heart when he saw the silent tears trickle down his beloved Annie's face. How he wished he could comfort his lifelong love. Hold her close. All he could do was offer a gentle squeeze of her hand as it rested in his. David's eyes lowered as he began to drift into times past.

The rush of water swirling down Grassy Creek after a hard summer rain was always a wonder for David as a boy. He and his younger brother, Joseph, had built a ramshackle treehouse in the grandfather oak tree. Here they had stashed their BB guns, fishing poles and homemade slingshots. They would

stow the sugar cookies and the Mason jar of lemonade that Mama had made for them before exploring the woods that edged the banks of Grassy Creek.

Every Saturday evening, music coming from the log cabin would fill the valley.

Mama played the old upright piano while Papa strummed his guitar. David and Joseph had violins tucked under their chins. David was not musically inclined and occasionally an odd screech would sting the musical offering. Joseph would look at him and wink.

"Where is my violin? I kept it for the memories of good times past. It must be here somewhere." David didn't realize he had spoken aloud. Annie left his side to return with his violin. She laid it across his body and placed his hands upon the scarred leather case. David's eyes fluttered, then opened. He worked at the rusty hinges until they sprang open. A shaking hand moved across the strings and he smiled. Annie laughed. They both remembered how their children would ask him to play a tune on his fiddle. "Tis not a fiddle. This is a fine violin given to me by my grandfather." David would swing the bow high overhead, do a slight curtsey and proceed to play. Screech.

Screech. The kids would howl with laughter. Annie and he exchanged a knowing grin.

Lord, how he loved this woman.

In late spring, before he became tethered to life support, David and Annie had spent a lazy afternoon on the banks of Grassy Creek. The daffodils Annie had planted the first year they had returned to the valley were in full bloom. Sunshine—like his Annie. David felt a grip of sadness. The daffodils would return next spring. He would not.

Exactly two weeks later. August 15. 11:35 p.m.

Annie sat alone with David. His breathing was shallow, then hard. He opened his eyes and looked into hers. She held his cold hand tight in hers and felt a twinge of pressure.

A look of awe and wonderment spread across David's face. One last breath.

Annie leaned close with a love-filled smile and whispered, "Safe journey, David."

June Winger

A Ghost Bone Bird on a Perch

Misty Lackey

Blind in a pillow sack

covered with the moon

on this dirt road of pretty

pain mixed into life.

Trees of autumn passing by

to the winter snowbird.

White as snow a ghost

bone bird on a perch.

Brown stems loving you

singing to a memory.

McKenna Carson

Transitory

Betty Holt

Afternoon shadows
lengthen and linger,
cross narrow, winding roads
as verdant summer
imperceptibly gives way
to vibrant fall.

Inside as well
a growing grayness finds
corners of my mind
I thought safe from touch.

It's quiet now.
  Only the katydids
  beckon the first frost.

Nature's turning
toward the final
blast of colors,
the last siege of life
before the world
lapses into slience.

Encounter

Paul Crockett

(Music)

"Good evening, listeners, and welcome to tonight's edition of *People and Places.* Tonight we have a very special guest, one whom I'm sure you've all heard of. Please welcome Hunter Underhill, commander of our last moon mission."

(Hissing sound)

(Static)

"...very glad to be here tonight. I've always wanted to be on *People and Places.* I've been listening to it ever since I was very young."

"We're glad to have you, Hunter, and I'm sure that all of our listeners are eager to hear all about your experiences on the moon. Tell us, what was it like up there?"

"Well, I wouldn't want to live there, but in a way, it was beautiful. The stars are so clear up there, it seemed like they were almost close enough to touch. The low gravity was a lot of fun. Sharpe, Tracker and I spent the first few minutes on the surface just bouncing around."

"Tell us, what was the purpose of this particular mission?"

"Nothing too exciting—mostly geological surveys. We were also able to take a look at the proposed site for the Space Agency's planned moon base."

"Tell us about this base. We've heard speculation that it could serve as a jumping-off point for expeditions to other planets in our system."

"The plan for now is for scientists to stay in it while they study the moon, but we may yet launch missions to other planets from it, once we have the technology."

"Well, Hunter, this has been very interesting so far, but I'm sure that most of our listeners are very impatient for me to get to the point. Tell us about what you found up there besides rocks."

"Well, the day we made the discovery started out normal enough. Sharpe and I suited up that morning—well, it was morning according to the clock, but morning hardly looks different from night up there—and went out.

Tracker stayed behind with the ship that time. Our plan for the day was to climb over a large hill near where we landed and do some exploring on the other side."

(Static)

"…would have been a tough climb, but due to the low gravity on the moon, it was pretty easy, even in our suits. We came down the other side, and onto a wide plain of sorts, with big craters all over it. We took a few rock samples and were able to confirm the theories that there were unknown minerals on the moon. We radioed the information back to Tracker and started getting ready to go back to the ship. We weren't able to take any of the rocks with us, but we planned to come back later in the buggy and load up. We were just about to leave when I saw the footprints."

"What did they look like?"

"Small and sort of…."

(Static)

"…shock when I realized what they were, and I told Sharpe that I thought he should come take a look."

"What did Sharpe say when he saw the footprints?"

"His exact words were…."

(Static)

(Laughter)

"Anyway, Sharpe was all for following the tracks, and the more I thought about it, the more I agreed with him. I thought it would be a real shame to leave without seeing just what was up there with us. We radioed Tracker back at the ship and told him where we were and what we were doing, then started following the tracks. After a short distance they stopped, and a set of wheel marks began. Whatever creature had been making the original tracks had gotten into a vehicle and driven off. So we followed those for quite some distance. By this point I was getting a bit worried that if we kept going for much longer, we might not have enough oxygen in our tanks to make it back to the ship."

"I see. So did you turn around?"

"No, we kept going. Looking back on it, it does seem like a pretty stupid thing to do, but we made it, so I guess it was all right."

"So then you saw…."

"Yes—we came around a big rock, and sitting there on the plain was this gigantic spaceship. It was incredible—it must have been five or six times the size of our own ship. It was all silvery, and sort of wedge shaped. The whole thing was lit up with little lights all over it, sort of pretty, really."

"What did you do?"

"I just stood there and stared, but Sharpe got really excited. He started yelling, 'We're not alone!' He'd always hoped that intelligent life would be…."

(Static)

"…lifelong dream for him. I was just starting to catch some of his enthusiasm when the aliens came out."

"What did they look like?"

"It was hard to tell at that point. They were wearing space suits, suits that made ours look like something you'd find in a museum. The aliens' suits were almost form-fitting, and didn't look like they weighed more than a suit of dress clothes. Their faces were covered with these sleek helmets, with big bug-eye type bulges in them that they saw out through. Actually, I was able to notice a few things about how they were put together, even suited up like that."

"Such as?"

"Well, they were on the short side. I think one of them would probably come about up to my shoulders. They had a pretty slender build, too. I think if one of us got into a physical fight with one of them, we'd win. They had very small feet, which we'd already noticed when we saw their footprints."

(Burst of static)

"In any event, by the time Sharpe and I had taken all this in, the aliens had started towards us."

"Did you try to run away?"

"It wouldn't have done any good. We were on foot, and they were in these little vehicles with open tops and large wheels. I don't think I could've torn Sharpe away even if we had been able to outrun them, though. He was just ecstatic. Not only had he seen some aliens, he was about to be one of the first to meet them. Then, four of them came right up to us. They all jumped out of their vehicles, and two of them pointed what must have been some kind of weapon at us. One came forward and stuck out its arm at me. I thought it was going to attack me, so I got ready to defend myself. They must have realized that I thought they wanted to harm me, because one of them grabbed the one who had approached me and pulled it back. It looked like they talked with each other for a bit—I think they may have been as surprised to see us as we were to see them. Then, one of them went back to their ship, and when it came back, it was carrying a black box with rounded corners, which it gave to me."

"And you took it?"

"Well, at first I thought it might be some kind of bomb, but then one of them showed me how to work it. He pushed a little button on the side of the box, and it lit up and started showing all these moving images. They had sound to go with them, but I couldn't hear it at that point. Both of us were reluctant to leave, but our air supply was getting low, so we knew we had to start back. We gestured our thanks to the aliens—I think they may have understood—and turned around and left."

"Was that the last you saw of them?"

"No, actually. Two of them followed us a short distance behind on one of their vehicles. About halfway back to our ship, Sharpe came up with the idea of asking them for a ride back."

"How did he get this across to the aliens?"

"He pointed to himself, then to one of the vehicles, then back towards our ship. The aliens seemed to get the message. One of them pointed to Sharpe, then to its vehicle, so Sharpe took that as an invitation to get in. He hopped in, and I got in next to them. We got back to our ship in a matter of seconds. I don't know what powers those vehicles, but they're fast and have really smooth rides, too. If I'd closed my eyes, I think I hardly would have known we were moving at all. We

got safely back to our ship, and they let Tracker come out and gawk at them for a few minutes. Just before they left, one of them did something really unexpected. Somehow, it had managed to patch into our radio communication channel, and it spoke to us."

"What did it say?"

"I have no idea, but it had the nicest-sounding voice, sort of deep and musical. Then they drove off, and that was the last I saw of them. We stayed on the moon for several more days, but when Sharpe and I went back to the place where we'd seen the alien spaceship, it was gone. The rest of the mission was uneventful, and we returned…."

(Static)

"So you never got to see what they looked like under those suits?"

"I did, but not in person. You see, the box they gave me was full of sounds and images from their homeworld. Scientists have been studying them ever since we got back from the moon."

"And some of those images were of how the aliens really looked?"

"Yes. I already mentioned how they're short and slight of build, but they're also sort of pale, with round heads, big ears and stubby little noses. They have long fingers with tiny claws on the end, and they're…."

(Static)

"…but only in certain places. They…."

(Static)

"…obviously warm-blooded, because several of the images from the box showed…."

(Static)

"…more importantly, the box also had a device to teach us the aliens' language. Our scientists let me work with it for a bit, and I was able to pick up a couple of words."

"Incredible! So, if you ever see these aliens again, you might be able to communicate with them. Do you think they'll ever come back?"

"I'm almost sure they will. In fact, I'm not completely positive that they ever left. They could still be up there, keeping an eye on us."

"It's been a most interesting evening here with you, Hunter, but I'm afraid we're almost out of time. I think there's time for one last question before we bid our listeners good night: what should we call these aliens? Did the language device they gave you say what name they had for themselves?"

"Hmm, I think it did. Let me see if I can remember…."

(Static)

"…was…."

(Static)

"Oh, now I remember! The aliens are called Humans! That's it, Humans!"

"Humans…how interesting. Well, I'm afraid we've run our of time. Thank you for your time, Hunter, and your incredible story of how you met the Humans."

"You're very welcome. Any time."

"Let's all give a big hiss for those three brave astronauts, Hunter Underhill, Swiftclaw Sharpe, and Grayscale Tracker!"

(Hissing sound)

(Music)

A clawed hand turned the radio off. The setting sun shone through the windows of the squat, single-story building, illuminating a tall and scaly creature. Its thick tail twitched as it pondered what it had heard. "Humans…" it wondered in a sibilant voice.

John Cisneros

Sonnet for Three AM

(Dedicated to Rod Skager)

Ralph B. Montee

"Things never look good at three AM," you said.
Angry bees buzz at the back of the mind
Push in, filling you with moments of dread.
The seconds tick by so slowly you find
Yourself in a place you do not want to be
Blind and wandering on a granite mountain.
You know there must be another way to see:
Perhaps, life itself is the fabled fountain.
You said, "It is like going through a door, not knowing
What is waiting on the other side."
Now you've walked to the edge of life, finding
The garled knots of fear untied.
    The taste of bacon brought tears to your eyes
    Each breath a triumph, each simple pleasure, a prize.

NANCY MINARD

Beyond Shadows

Joyce Foster

Shadows grayed into her kitchen
like a kitten stalking its prey
as light edged
through naked windows
and bled
        across
the yellow mountain.
She stood in the maze
of packing crates
and rugs rolled up exposing
floors satiny as new
        skin
now laid bare to the heels
of dancers whirling
to the cacophonous chords
of dreams
        unraveling.
She threaded her way
across the undressed rooms
past the divided spoils
of chairs and beds and TV sets,
of friendships and children's
        love
and reached for the light.

Spring Etiquette

Wilford Corbin

Hey, little water boy!
Bring the water 'round.
If you don't like your job,
Lay that water bucket down.

I was seven the summer I carried water to the workers harvesting hay, hoeing corn and cradling wheat in the cove above the house. One day I was paid five cents. And I thought that was good money. I dipped the water into a two-gallon bucket from our spring under a large hemlock across the branch about fifty yards from the house. Every house in our valley was located near a spring with either a gourd or aluminum dipper that you drank out of, or used to fill a bucket to carry to the house or to the workers in the field. Our spring of crystal clear, cold water was in a bowl-like depression inside a small opening under a large flat rock that resembled the entrance to a small cave. A wide board was leaned against the opening to keep dogs from drinking out of the spring. Our dipper was aluminum that we lay on the rock and was never lost or misplaced in all the years I lived there. Another aluminum dipper with a smaller bowl and longer handle was carried in the bucket to the workers. When I dipped water to fill the bucket, I was watchful not to include crawfish and spring lizards or to stir the water and pick up trash.

On arrival in the field, I set the bucket down at the first worker I came to, careful not to turn it over. After he drank, I picked the bucket up and carried it to the next closest man and so on til all had drunk. If any water remained in the bucket, sometimes someone would drink it. Otherwise I poured out what was left and went back to the house where I waited about an hour or until the men hollered for more.

At the end of each workday, the first place the men went to was the spring where the first man to arrive removed the wide board from the opening, retrieved the dipper from the large flat rock, dipped some water then handed it to the man standing closest.

"After you," the man responded.

"Go ahead," he said, as the man then took the dipper and drank the water. He dipped water for the others who each said, "After you," then took the dipper and drank when he said, "Go ahead." After all were served, he drank his fill then returned the dipper to the top of the large flat rock and leaned the wide board over the entrance to the spring.

Several summers later, I was working in the field with the men when my younger brother was serving as water boy. I don't know how much he was paid. I only remember how glad I was when he came with the bucket of cold spring water that quenched my thirst.

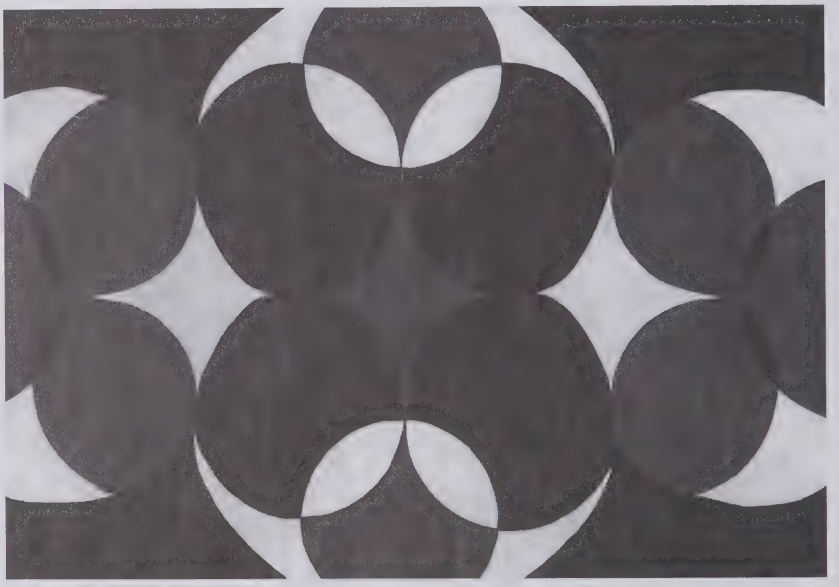
Once at the end of the workday, I arrived first at the spring. So I removed the wide board from the opening, retrieved the dipper from the large flat rock, dipped some water then turned and handed it to the man standing closest.

"After you," the man said.

I said, "Go ahead." He then took the dipper and drank the water. I dipped water for the others who each said, "After you," then took the dipper and drank when I said, "Go ahead." After all were served, I drank what I wanted then returned the dipper to the top of the large flat rock and leaned the wide board across the entrance to the spring. The men smiled their approval. I felt proud for having observed proper etiquette at the spring.

Amber C. Hughes

WREN HANEY



Those things that are straight or round the surfaces and solids; which a lathe or square and rule produces from the straight and round… those things are beautiful not, like most things, in a relative sense; they are beautiful in their very nature.

Plato

Lindsay Turrentine

The Escape

Shawna Solito

A precocious thought got away
and was hunted down by a trained pack
of verbs, staining the damp earth, showing the way
for those paying close attention in the black

of night. Thankfully, a shy moon
sank sneakily around a particularly wet
cloud to allow a quick glimpse of maybe; but too soon
the moonbeam was swallowed up. So the thought set

off again, wary of mispronunciation and rhyme.
The thought came upon a wall and slowed
to ponder the tallness of it all, the why,
when again it heard the angry call, the verbs had grown

in numbers, large. To escape it must scale ten,
maybe more, meters/feet, of slippery wall
that stood between sure demise and freedom when
a rope came dangling from the moon to fall

at the ground, nice and neat, soft and white,
and extremely strong. The thoughts it toss
was true, and threw the rope into the night
to land upon the other side, quietly in a bed of moss.

The thought then slipped into the dark
where no one slept or searched for reason.
The verbs continued to squeal and bark
for thoughts are always in season.

SARAH JOHNSON

The Old Master

Timothy Kurr

God, Pablo! If I could write like
you. If I could transform flies into
soul-filled things, tyrant-toothed and
thirsty. You did not know this ostentation,
did not care for gilded schemes.
And it was so much truer with your pen.
So much more like that wild rose with
six-inch thorns that climbs around
my brain.

If I could write with your sadness
then maybe,
maybe, I could see the broken
plate of glass that lies upon the
sky, that breaks more and more with
each sunken heart.

Somnambulist me, I tread dream-sand
straight into the sea of convention.
Here no hint of abstention and
in these words I fall away, body like
a skydiver's, from the point of it all.

But you! What was it that made it so
right? Did you crack that pipeline to
Him? Did the sirens sing, as you
learned that you were one of them—
while I remain this ditto-thing
in your menagerie?

Listen to the Cold

George Frizzell

leaves
dry brittle
no moisture
crack break fall
apart at every touch
whirled against wood and metal
of house
wind
crackle dryness
ground unforgiving
except harsh
snap of breaking frozen grass
and,

your voice

LINDSAY TURRENTINE

I Had Forgotten

Kasey Welch

I had forgotten
Forgotten the noise
Forgotten the barren land
Forgotten the stench of life
And of death
All the darkness had been forgottten
And yet with it was the good
For I had forgotten the life
I had forgotten when all was peace
I had even forgotten my love
Both gained and lost
I had forgotten all this
And yet it is nothing
For I remember you
I remember your touch
An embrace I am desperate to feel
I remember your face
And I remember your voice
But most I remember your love
And though I have forgotten much
I remember us
And so I have forgotten nothing

JENNY JAMES

Joshua Hughes

Twist of Fate

Joanna Dickson

Out behind the Yelton's house, in a tiny yellow cottage with a wellhouse out front, lived Mabel Corbin, who by a strange twist of fate, was Robert Lee's sister-in-law. His younger brother, Jimmy, who had run away and joined the army, got drunk one night and married a piece of white trash from up north somewhere. Jimmy then had the decency to drop dead, but not before he brought Mabel back to Job's Corner and deposited her on the doorstep of his older brother. Jimmy had been the undisputed black sheep of the family, though everyone else in town seemed to find him almost lovable, especially after they recognized the irony of his final gesture, when he, in effect, left Mabel for Robert Lee to deal with.

Robert Lee took one look at Mabel and decided, quite erroneously as it turned out, that she was a slut. But he was also too proud of his reputation as not only the richest man in town but, in his humble opinion, its most devout Christian as well, not to provide for her, as his late brother's widow, in a way that he deemed fit. This turned out to be finding her a place to live—other than in HIS house. Actually, he and Irene had plenty of room for her in their enormous antebellum home, but he wasn't about to let her move in with them.

Irene wouldn't have stood for that. Instead, he worked out a deal with his neighbor, Mr. Ben Yelton, to let her use the little yellow cottage out behind his place.

The Yelton's house sat next door to the Corbin's, separated only by a thick privet hedge and a couple hundred light years. So Mabel, once ensconced in the little yellow cottage, was still within easy walking distance of Robert Lee's. She had only to squeeze through a space in the hedge whenever she felt like dropping in on him. Which was just often enough to remind him that she was still there and had no intention of going anywhere.

Mabel was a rangy-looking woman, downright homely, in fact, who looked as though she had seen some hard times before she ever set foot in Job's Corner or even met up with Jimmy. Someone had been heard passing the remark that maybe since Jimmy had been drunk when he married her, she had looked pretty good to him.

Her scruffy mouse-colored hair was either put up in pink curlers or tied back in a heavy brown hairnet. She was often seen, curiously enough, wearing the curlers around town, in the post office and grocery store, and this had the local women puzzled, until Adele Toms finally figured it out. Her conclusion was that Mabel rolled her hair up when she went shopping so people would think she had somewhere to go that evening.

She wore high socks and saddle shoes, along with her shapeless faded cotton dresses, and suffice it to say that her legs had never known the touch of a razor's blade. She went wherever she needed to go in Jimmy's old blue pickup, and her German Shepherd, Rye Bread, always went with her, sitting beside her in the front seat, looking out the window like any other passenger who was enjoying the scenery.

She must have known that she was far from welcome in Job's Corner, but she had enough sense to realize that now she was a Corbin, whether Robert Lee liked it or not, and she figured that made her a somebody. She wasn't about to hightail it back to wherever she came from. No, sir. She sized up the situation pretty quick—it was hard to miss Robert Lee's disdain of her—but, ignoring that, she settled herself right down in Job's Corner, where she obviously planned to devote the rest of her life to being the thorn in his side, or, as he put it, his cross to bear.

Mabel spent very little time in her little yellow house, other than to make a pot of strong coffee every morning along with a batch of biscuits that she rolled out with a beer bottle.

"That's the secret," she said the morning she was showing me her method. "Rollin' 'em with a beer bottle. Does something to the consistency."

The rest of her day she spent "putting in" tobacco for one of the Yelton boys during the season or sitting on the porch at Miss Annie's. She was good at pitching in with whatever chore was there to do—shelling butter beans, stringing green beans, or just sitting and running her mouth. She liked to do that, all right. Mabel had one of the foulest mouths folks in Job's Corner had ever heard. And they had heard some pretty foul ones in their day.

The county health inspector came around one afternoon and told Mabel she would have to get her well cleaned up before he could give it a passing rating, and quick as a wink she told HIM that when "Robert Lee does something about his tenants' shithouses," she would worry about her well. That took care of THAT—for a while.

Mabel was—have you guessed—a chain smoker. She had a cigarette hanging out the side of her mouth every time I saw her. That's probably what kept her as thin as a yard dog. Her skin was an awful shade of gray, and although she looked about as unhealthy as a person could look, she was rarely sick.

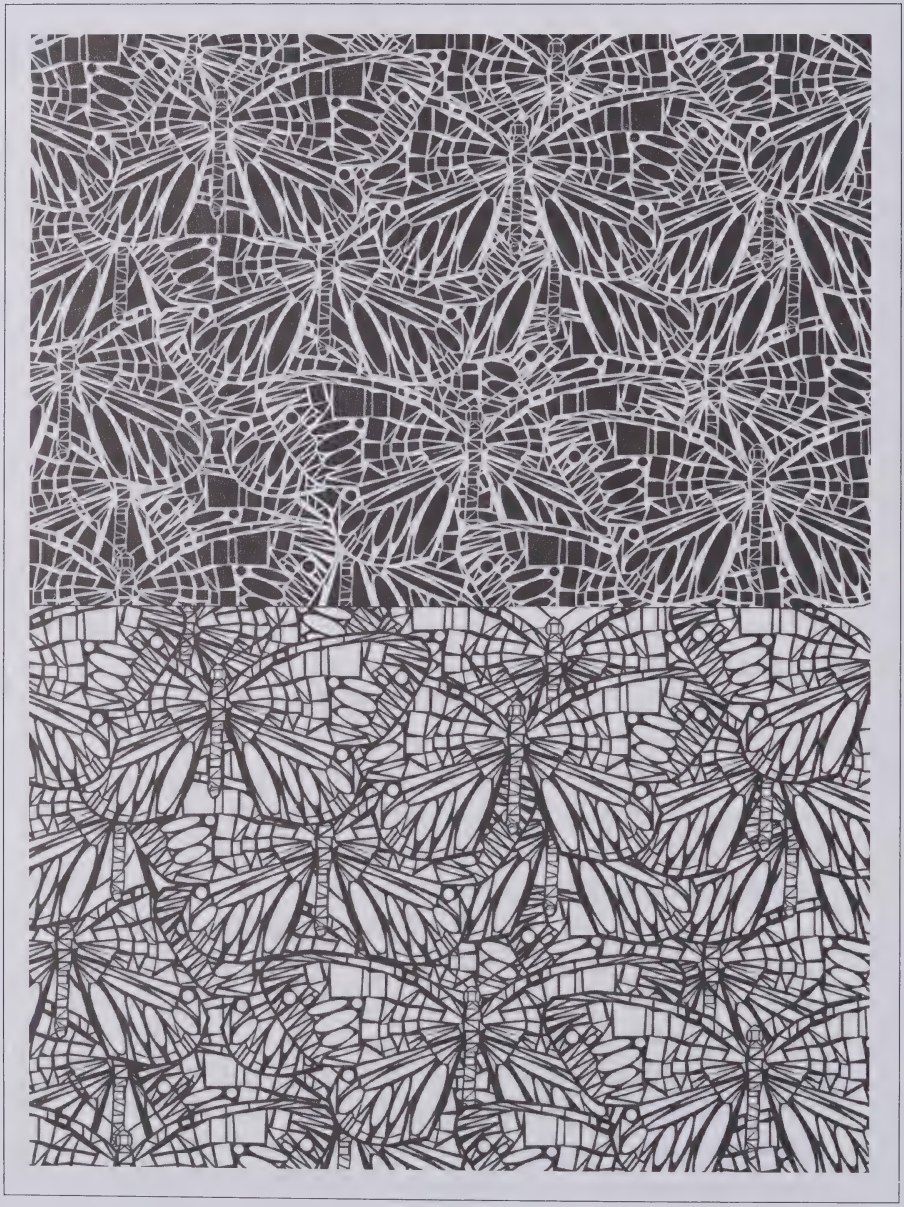
To her credit, she possessed a wry sense of humor. Overhearing one day a

man at the post office referring to her as that "skinny old cow that Jimmy Corbin left on Robert Lee's doorstep," she was seen slowing down to a crawl the next time she and Rye Bread passed the man on the street, whereupon she leaned out the window and let fly a long loud MOOOOOoooooooooo.

Once it dawned on everybody how much it bothered Robert Lee to have Mabel around, folks fine-tuned their attitudes toward her, and many of them realized that they had actually become fond of her. She was proving to be a harmless sort, and it WAS a wee bit satisfying to see how much she irritated Robert Lee, who had NOT endeared himself to many folks in town. But just when people had begun to accept Mabel, just when she had achieved the status of being something of the town "character," she up and suprised everyone again. Without breathing a word to anyone until her plans were made, she announced one day that she was going back to Chicago to work for an old lady she had known up there. And as quick as that, she just packed up Rye Bread, her beer bottles and few possessions, and left town, almost as suddenly as she had come.

Robert Lee was visibly relieved to be rid of her, but before two years were up, Mabel paid a surprise visit. She drove into town unannounced one fine October afternoon, not in Jimmy's old pickup but in a brand new, shiny, black Cadillac. True, not everything had changed. Rye Bread was still riding in the front seat. But Mabel was wearing a fur coat and some big diamond rings.

The story that got around, after she'd paid a visit to the Yeltons, a brief duty call to Robert Lee and Irene, and, most importantly, to the hotbed of news output in Job's Corner—the post office—was that this lady she'd worked for had owned a bunch of apartments in downtown Chicago and had left three of them to Mabel when she died in July. Mabel was passing through town, she said, on her way to retire in Florida. Whether or not this was the truth, we had no way of knowing, but, after all, Mabel DID show up driving the big car and she WAS wearing big diamond rings and a fur coat, and I don't believe she would have rented them as props for a joke. That simply wouldn't have occurred to her. No, we all decided that maybe Mabel was just one of those people who seem to lead a charmed life. Everybody in town, with the possible exception of Robert Lee, was tickled for her, and for years after that, you could still hear people, whenever they met up with Robert Lee, inquiring about his sister-in-law.



John Cisneros

Dance of the Fireflies

Patricia H. Graham

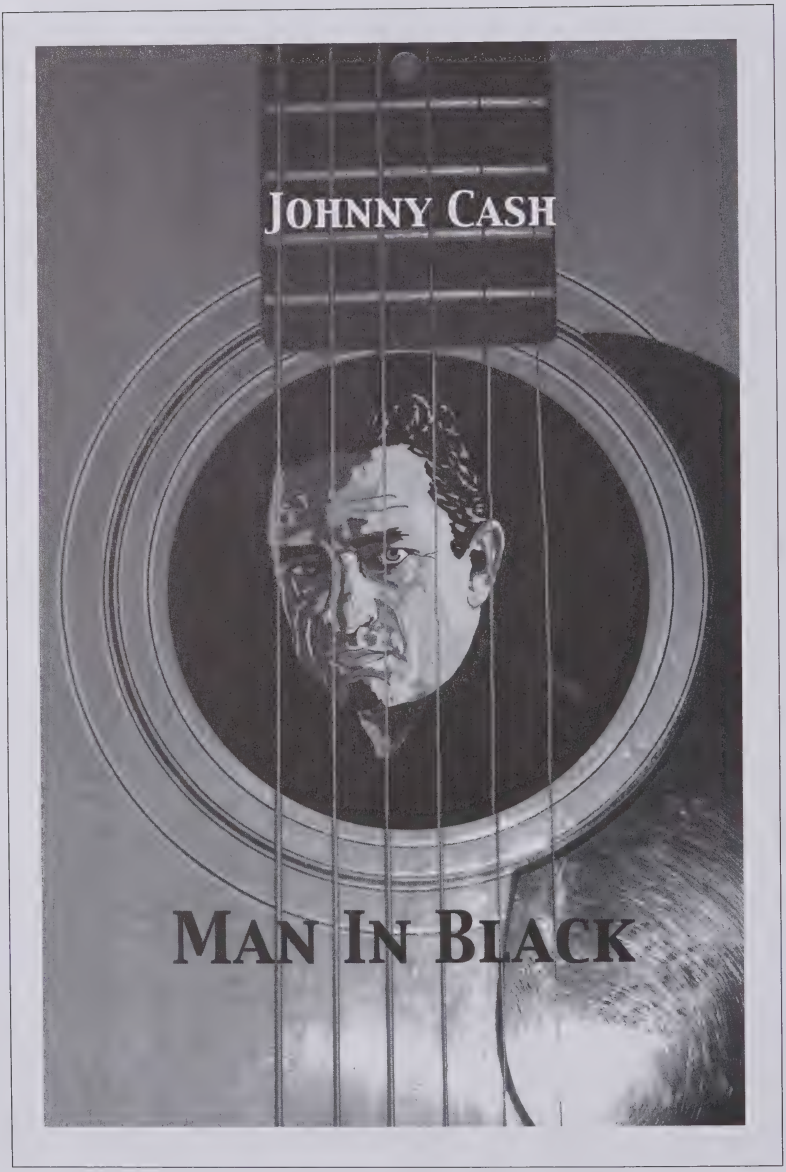
As the sun began to set
And the horizon bleeds
yellows, reds, and oranges
A dance in the forest has begun

Tiger lilies greet their guest
Arriving at forest's door,
June bugs playing banjos.
Lanterns now light the way

A procession of fireflies
Dancing upon the air
Cedars swaying with the beat
Stars bear witness to the dance.

Pairing off and silhouettes revealed.
The dance of the fireflies are entwined
A musical waltz of harmony
Like musical notes on a score

Nature pulls her curtain down
Only to request an encore performance
For the next evening once again
Featuring the "Dance of the Fireflies."



Bethany Kullen

Dowd's Time

Mark Prudowsky

Only the creek
washes the tire worn
by Dowd's shack.

Patch of sunlight
base of a redbud, wolf
lifts its leg in the bindweed.

Through a cracked pane
held purchase to a listing frame
a wooden timepiece
longs for its sway-arm

its mute regret
hangs opposite
a crucifix's
abandoned atonement.

The wind hums
in the river cane.

Only the creek
washes the tire worn
by Dowd's shack.

New Memories of the Past

George Frizzell

remember
whatever you want
of the past
walk through it
recall it fondly
or with bitterness,
nostalgia, or indifferent

just don't bring me into it
I don't want to talk about it
analyze or second guess
re-live, revive, revile
or revel
It doesn't matter
if what I recall
happened at all

I have new memories
of the past

Raymond Michaels

The Violin

Patricia H. Graham

to my mother for believing in me

The long hairs of the bow
Caressed her body

She sang for him often;
Music of sadness,
Joys and great Classics.

She lies in a velvet bed
Encased within her tomb
Only to be released to
Fulfill his passion

Her voluptuous curves
Are delightful and
Pleasant to his eyes
She is his slave

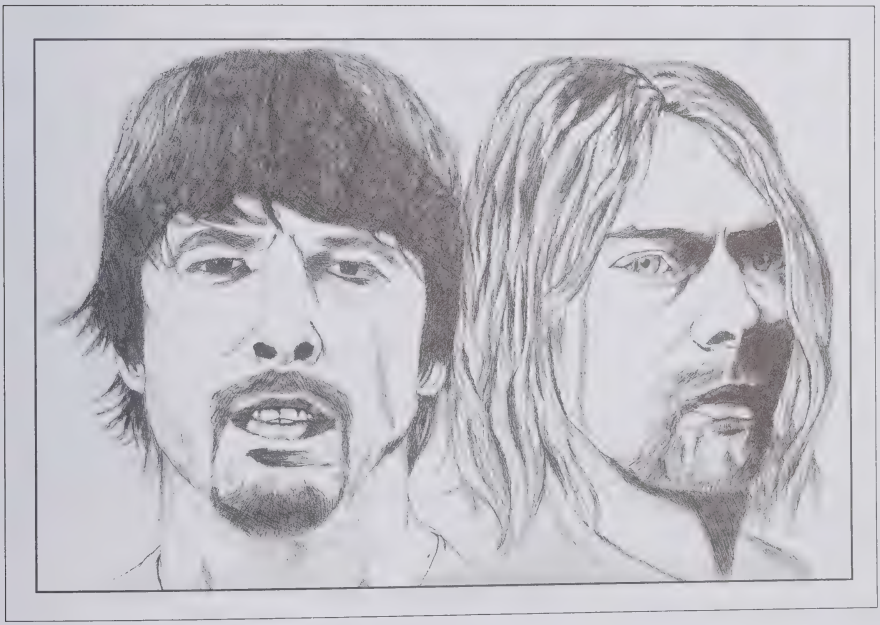
He rubs her with
Oils from afar
To maintain
Her shape and design

She is the violin
Called "The Stradivarius"
She is loved by all
And owned by few

She is the Lady Rose
Conquered by
The master violinist

Beth Ann Brophy

Crystal Severson



Daniel Brooks

Angels of Light

Al Bouchard

Angels of Light
Brighten all earth shadows
Angels of Light emerge

Angels of clear radiance
Open all portals
For peaceful coexistence
Angels of Light emerge

Angels of all radiant hues
Manifest greater understanding
Of earth's vast plenties
Angels of Light emerge

Angels of joy, love, compassion
Eliminate shadows that none may hide
To harm or deny another
Angels of Light emerge

Angels of cooperation

Release dominance, fear, aggression

In all its forms

Angels of Light emerge

All Beings of earth

Cast off shackles of separation

Attune to your angelic nature

Angels of Light emerge

Angels garbed in human form

From all boundaries break free

Anchored in Love and unity

Angels of Light emerge

Emerge Angels of Light

Repetition of Life

Margaret Marr

A crazy Repetition

Of life is all

I seem to live

Opening the same doors

Traveling the same halls

Until my sanity screams

Let me out!

I need the freshness

Of a glorious new day

To travel to exotic locales

To ride a shooting star

Fly above the clouds

But I'm stuck here

In the mortal madness

Longing for the elixir

Of the gods

To sail me away

On brighter ships of tomorrow

FOREST WOODWARD

This Morning

Eric Hendrix

This morning
The fog sits like a snake waits,
Curling its way downstream
Until it dissolves
Beneath the sun rising
Over the valley

This morning
I drive the river road
Winding beside the waterway
Until it disapears
Below the bridge passing
Across the wet basin

A voice sings, "The oneness…the oneness,"
I watch the cattle in the dale
Glittering frost gleams
Upon the damp green earth.
Beside my car disappearing above
The field below

As I approach
The farmhouse where I live.

NANCY MINARD

Bonfires

Greg Smith

In the summer, life is still and hot, and breathes in great gasps
To fill itself with the violently fertile air.

The sky seems to expand,
To embrace other worlds, other gods, whose domains are more
Full, more fair.

In this robust season, the hearts of men beat
Slowly, in time with the stately turning of the earth.

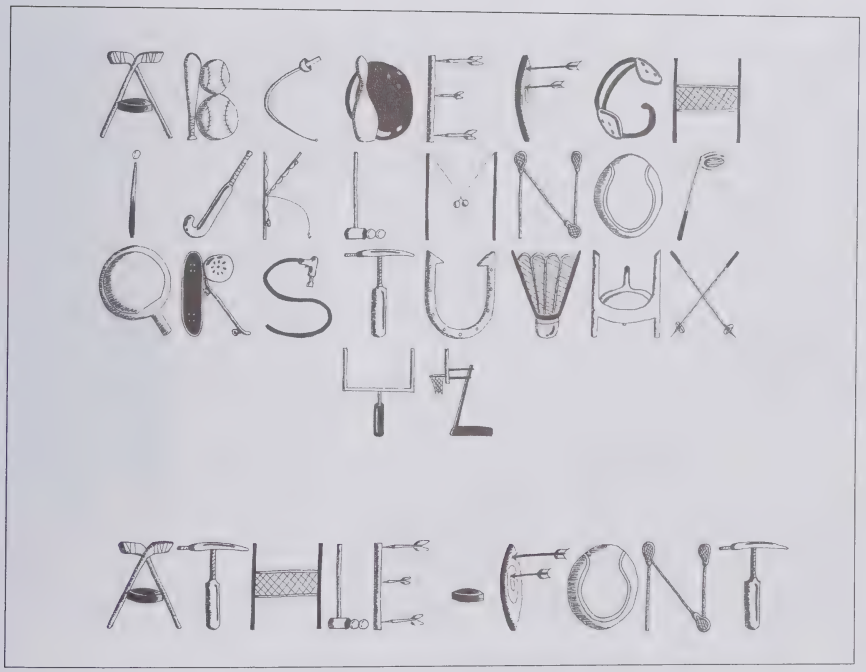
And as turns the earth, so we do in our fitful sleep turn and turn,
Dreaming lovely dreams, helpless in our shallow slumber
To bring about their birth.

When awake, we feel our sweat-slick skin and wonder at the
Labor which induced so great an energy.

While summer, green and blue and red and gold, works in her
Turn to bind in those dreams, her windblown, sun-streaked
Elegy.

As the moon casts its pewter light along warm, shallow streams and in
Full-leafed trees, we sigh and turn again,

For summer is the keeper of dreams, the ripe-sweet repository
Of hope and faith—it is light and lucidity, darkness and delusion,
It is the bonfire of our souls' remains.



Wren Haney

Granny Miller

Joyce Foster

She was soft and round, fragile
like a much loved doll.
I remember her dressed only in black
with a collar of white crochet around her neck
and her hair, the color of fresh
churned clabber, pulled back into a knot.

She would tell us of her childhood,
how the war marched
over her Tennessee hills
on dark boots and tired hooves,
turned fields and gardens into red mire
and left muddy prints across her heart.

I would trace the blue roads
on the backs of her hands with
small fingers and listen,
for my travels had barely begun
and I had no stories, at least none
that I could tell.

June Winger

Snowflake

Barbara Wiggins

Wispy, little snowflake
So fragile and so white.
Come drifting down from heaven,
Oh! What a pretty sight.

I often think while watching,
These dainty little things.
Oh! Could it be that angels,
Are dusting off their wings?

JOHN CISNEROS

The Gift

Rita Watkins

I look at you and I see a vision of someone a long time gone.

Your face is near mine, it has aged with grace and beauty, into the image of her own.

Your eyes are looking at me; her reflection is peaceful in them.

I hear her voice when you speak; the tone is sweet and calm.

You are gentle, and you have patience. Your manner is tolerant and soothing, a reminder of someone from another time.

I know you as yourself, and the amazing person that you are, your goodness was a part of her.

When I am in your presence, I feel another presence from long ago, one that held a child in loving, caring arms.

LINDSAY TURRENTINE

Catch the Light

Greg Smith

It is like running headlong
Into the wind,
Torn sod tumbling up
Beneath my feet,
Hair flailing at the nape
Of my neck.

And the light, liquid
And cool, slides around
Motionless motes of dust
And into my eyes,
Piercing the color of the dying day,
Defying the wind.

It is the light of a young sun,
A childhood morning,
Sparkling in the depths
Of my mind—
A light which woke me then
like an ice-cold shot
Of transparent liquor.

It's like running headlong
Into the wind,
Tears burning in my eyes,
Leaving moist, salty trails on my cheeks.
It's like the death of night,
And my heart strains
To catch the light.

KYLE DOLBEE

Call for Submissions

Manuscripts for the 2006 edition of SCC *Milestone* will be accepted through December 1, 2005. In the event that funding is not secured for publication, submissions will be held and considered for the next issue.

Each submission should include the author's name, address, and phone number on every page.

Essays, local history, poetry, and short stories—as well as black-and-white artwork—may be submitted. All submissions should be typed or printed, and prose is limited to 2,000 words.

Seven people whose manuscripts or works of art are selected for publication will also receive cash rewards:

- First and second prize in poetry
- First and second prize in prose
- First and second prize in artwork
- Cover

Students, faculty, staff, and alumni—along with residents of Macon, Swain, and Jackson counties and the Qualla Boundary—may submit manuscripts to the SCC *Milestone*.

For additional information, contact Southwestern Community College's Public Information Office at 828-586-4091, extension 265.

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